

Krugliak M., Myroniuk M. Attitudes to the single mothers and abandoned children in the society of Naddniprianska Ukraine in the nineteenth – early twentieth centuries

In the modern world, which seeks social, national and gender equality, the problem of single mothers and homeless children is still urgent. Even though a woman of the third millennium is no longer condemned for bringing up a child without a father and not married, and such children are no longer called bastards, the presence of single-parent families still affects the development of the child's personality and the perception of his/her society. But before getting the right not to be social pariahs, single mothers had to go a long way, full of physical punishment, exile and public condemnation.

The second problem that we would like to raise in the article is the appearance of the world of illegitimate children and the state's attitude to this problem. It is important to find out what was the number of abandoned children in Ukraine in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whether this was a pan-European scale phenomenon, how the state worried about such children in the shelters. The experience of the past will help to find ways to solve the problem of single mothers in modern times.

Pokrytka (from the word «cover», «pokryvaty» – in Ukrainian) is the old folk name of the girl who lost her virginity («wreath»), gave birth to an illegitimate child.

The peasants sharply negated the extra-marriageable fertility. If the girl had an illegitimate child, then she and her family were expected to be a shame, a hatred of fellow villagers, and if she had no family, then poverty. The mother of the sinner's parents often turned away from her and her child. Often she was forced to leave the village, move to the city, become a prostitute, throw a child or desperate to kill him/her. Women who had to give birth not from their husbands, tried to cause artificial miscarriage, often turned to harlots.

In the funds of the State Archives of Zhytomyr region, we find many cases of «killing the child». Most often, a woman went on such a step, if she had intimate relations with a married man, with a master, another unmarried peasant or a servant, could not financially provide her child, etc. Russian legislation severely punished women for such steps, especially during the feud days.

Russian pre-Soviet historian Ivan Janzhul noted three reasons for the increase in the number of illegitimate children in any society: 1) the degree of development and well-being of the people in connection with its laws and institutions; 2) some local customs; 3) special occasional conditions, such as: accumulation and prolonged stay of troops in a certain area, significant emigration.

So, the single mother in the XIX – early twentieth century remained a social pariah in the rural environment, although the attitude towards her and the children born to her, overtime, still somewhat improved. An explanation of this should be sought in the modernization processes that encompassed Russian society in the second half of the nineteenth century, the world processes of emancipation and the gradual expansion of the principles of the traditional family. Urbanization calls for single mothers in cities where the moral teachings of a traditional society are not so effective, which is not threatened with public condemnation.

The problem of abandoned children in Russian and Ukrainian society became urgent in the late nineteenth century. Every issue of the newspapers was reported by the children left to their fate in Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Berdychiv, and others like that. Orphan houses and shelters did not contain such a large number of bastards, requiring expansion and repair. However, the functions of the state in regulating this issue were more formal in nature. The maximum responsibility for caring for these children was assumed by the public.

Key words: pokrytka, foundling, illegitimate child, single mother, urbanization, emancipation, traditional Ukrainian society.